

Thunderstorms in Alabama



Thunderstorms are a common occurrence in Alabama. Although they can strike anytime, thunderstorms are most frequent in the spring and summer months, between March and August. Lightning, damaging wind, large hail, tornadoes, and flash floods are the hazards from thunderstorms.

The best defense against thunderstorms is to stay inside a substantial building. Shelters can protect you from deadly lightning, wind, large hail, tornadoes, and heavy rain. Fortunately, thunderstorms do not usually last a long time and will generally pass by in less than an hour. When thunderstorms are expected, be sure to pick up loose objects around your home or business before the storms arrive as they can become dangerous projectiles in strong winds.

Thunderstorms are categorized into three main types: Single-cell, Multicell (Squall Line), and Supercell.

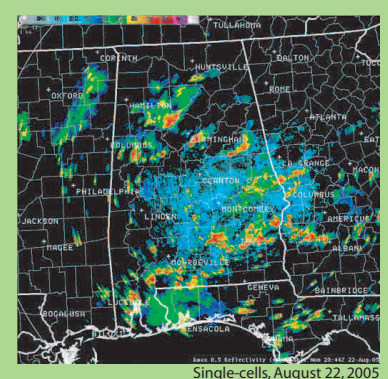
Single-cell thunderstorms, also known as pulse, airmass, or summertime thunderstorms, are individual cells or unorganized clusters of thunderstorms that are not usually severe. Frequent lightning strikes and locally heavy rainfall capable of producing floods are the main hazards from these storms. These typically slow-moving storms usually occur in the summer when the air is warm, moist, and unstable, and winds are weak.



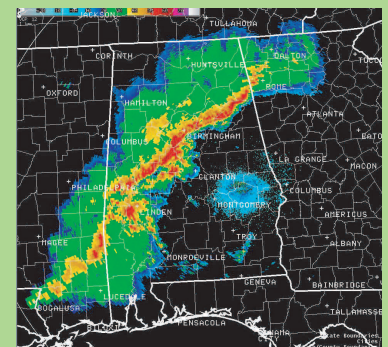
Severe Thunderstorm - A thunderstorm producing tornadoes, wind at or above 58 mph, and/or penny size hail (3/4 of an inch in diameter) or larger.

Multicell thunderstorms and squall lines are organized complexes of thunderstorms that cover large areas and great distances. These storms are often severe. Damaging wind is the main hazard since they move rapidly. Tornadoes, hail, and heavy rainfall capable of producing flash floods are possible with these storms as well. Squall lines are most common during the active spring and fall severe weather months of March, April, May, November, and early December.

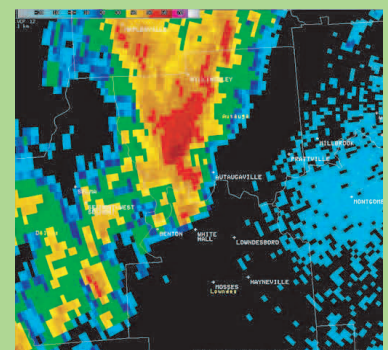
Supercell thunderstorms are the most dangerous category of thunderstorms. They can produce long-lived tornadoes, winds in excess of 100 mph, and very large hail. Fortunately, they are not common, and they usually cover small areas. At times, they can be embedded in clusters of thunderstorms or squall lines. Just like squall lines, supercells are most frequent during the active spring and fall severe weather months of March, April, May, November, and early December.



Single-cells, August 22, 2005



Squall Line, April 30, 2005



Tornadic Supercell (Autauga County), November 28, 2005